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## News



### Protesters rally to save schools

Posted: Saturday, Mar 20th, 2010

BY: TODD GUILD

Dozens of teachers, parents and children came to Watsonville Plaza Friday afternoon to protest cuts to Watsonville/Aptos Adult Education — and the preschools that fall under its jurisdiction.

As several preschool-aged kids played in the grassy park and the area around the bandstand, others stood on the sidewalk along Main Street, cheering as passing vehicles honked in support.

The rally was a response to the March 10 decision by the Pajaro Valley Unified School District Board of Trustees to send layoff notices to the director, assistant director and every teacher at the adult school.

Protestors held colorful signs that were handmade by the parents and preschoolers who attend El Jardín and Watsonville Cooperative preschools, both of which also provide parent education courses.

Both preschools could face closure if the layoff notices are not rescinded.

Superintendent Dorma Baker has said that the district has no intention to close the adult school, and that the decision to issue the layoff notices



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But those words are not comforting for the 60 teachers who work at the school, and for the students who depend on the services.

Malcom Blue-Medina, 6, brings a message to increase funding for education Friday at Watsonville Plaza. (Photos by Tarmo Hannula)

"It's sad, it's pathetic," Prunedale resident Breeze Medina, whose children attend El Jardín, said of the cuts. "If our children are our future, what is our future coming to?"

Pam Sexton also brings her kids to El Jardín, where she teaches parent education.

"We want our state priorities and our national priorities to focus more on children, on schools and on communities," she said. "The cuts happening are affecting the whole community."

In addition to El Jardin, Watsonville Cooperative Preschool is also facing an unsure future after the single teacher from each school received a layoff notice.

The cooperative preschool has been in operation for nearly 60 years, while El Jardín is about six years old.

Also facing possible elimination in the wake of the potential layoffs are Together in the Park programs — free activities for parents and young children, which are run by the adult school.

Many of the protesters conceded that the district, which cut \$14 million from next year's budget, has few places to target.

Instead, they said, the focus of the rally was a broader goal of encouraging activism.

"The school district is facing drastic cuts, and our presence here is to encourage people to raise their voices at a state and a federal level," Sexton said.

Marcia Poms, who teaches ESL classes at the adult school, said the cuts could reduce choices for adults trying to better their lives.

"These are parents who are trying to better themselves and their children," she said.

Tammy Mcroskey, who teaches at El Jardin, agreed. She said the community "cannot afford" to lose the program.

"Our programs are all about giving parents the tools and the confidence to guide their children through preschool and beyond," she said.

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